

Association, and other missionary organizations.¹¹⁶ Two churches, St. Stephen A. M. E. and St. Luke A. M. E. Zion, boasted large congregations and were integral in educational and political development. Church attendance reinforced a social stratification within the city's black population since many of the wealthier blacks attended St. Mark's Episcopal Church or Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church.

Educational development for Wilmington's African American population began in earnest with the arrival of teachers from the Freedmen's Bureau and American Missionary Association accompanied by funding from northern philanthropists. By 1868, the Freedmen's Bureau had established six schools in the city. One of the largest schools, established in 1867, became known as the Peabody School for its benefactor George Peabody. Another, Williston, began as a Freedmen's Bureau school in 1865 and was later funded by the American Missionary Association (AMA). Another AMA school, later known as Gregory Institute, began around 1866 and grew to provide training for future teachers and leaders, producing alumni who became community leaders in Wilmington and elsewhere.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ For more information on black churches in Wilmington, see Appendix B.

¹¹⁷ Despite attempts by benevolent organizations to improve African American education, native whites hindered black education by occasionally burning schools and through legislative failures to accommodate the needs of black students. After whites acknowledged that the education of blacks was a necessity, a debate on the type of education provided to blacks emerged. Black leaders favored a segregated educational system as much as whites. Black schools would provide employment for educated blacks. Additionally, blacks felt fellow black teachers could best teach students of their own race because they possessed similar backgrounds and attitudes. Further, black leaders feared that white teachers would teach lessons of white supremacy and

In community and civic affairs, the African American community fostered the overall development of Wilmington. Especially important to both blacks and whites was the development of fire companies. Initially volunteer organizations, fire companies emerged as useful social organizations as well. All-black fire companies were found in several parts of the city, and their equipment, efficiency, and camaraderie were sources of pride in the communities. The Cape Fear Steam Fire Engine Company, organized in 1871, was one of the earliest. At least 13 other black fire companies serviced the city over the last half of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

African Americans also participated in Wilmington politics, chiefly as members and leaders within the Republican Party. The Republican Party was their vehicle for seeking a voice in government. In 1868, there were 3,968 registered Republicans in New Hanover and black nominees were elected to office in the elections of the 1860s and 1870s. By the time Democrats recaptured control of the state in 1876, dissension in the county Republican Party resulted in fewer blacks securing election to office by the 1880s. In fact, dissent reached a critical point in the late 1880s when the "Independent Faction of the Republican Party" established itself and nominated its

black inadequacy instead of providing encouragement and strength. For more information on the history of African-American education in Wilmington, see Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 144-173; Haley, *Charles N. Hunter*, 12, 36.

¹¹⁸ The city assumed control of the fire departments in 1897 and began to pay black firefighters. Part of the agreement between the fire companies and the city was that the equipment that the fire companies had purchased was turned over to the city. However, after November 10, 1898, all black fire companies were replaced with white firefighters and the equipment, originally purchased by the blacks, remained city property. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 185-198.